



Record of Conversation

January 4, 2016

NTSB Accident Number: ERA14LA316, N957MD, Peachtree City, Georgia

On this date, I spoke with Mr. George McCallman. According to Mr. McCallman, he had flown with Mr. Jim Ritchey (the accident pilot's brother) one time, and Mr. John Ritchey (the accident pilot) a number of times in the accident airplane when it was based at Spruce Creek, Florida.

During the flight with Jim, initially with Jim at the controls and shortly after takeoff, about a couple hundred feet in the air, the rpm started backing off to about 3,000 rpm. The engine deceleration was rapid; the engine never quit, but Mr. McCallman thought it was beginning to seize; and it "sounded horrible." He thought from what he saw on the engine analyzer that there was a partial loss of power from the right side of the engine. Mr. McCallman took control of the airplane and subsequently flew a teardrop pattern back to the runway without further incident. Mr. McCallman was not sure if the airplane would have maintained altitude since the rpm was continuing to decrease and he was more concerned with making it back to the runway safely.

After landing, a witness advised Mr. McCallman that the engine had been blowing black smoke out of the exhaust. Other individuals stated the engine likely had stuck or sunk carburetor float. However, subsequent examination by a mechanic revealed no anomalies except that the dark appearance of the spark plug electrodes indicated that the fuel mixture had been burning rich. Mr. McCallman had a mechanic clean the spark plugs, and they drained fuel from the sumps, after which there were no further difficulties with engine power that he knew of until hearing about the accident.

After that incident, Mr. McCallman flew with John a couple more times at Spruce Creek in the traffic pattern. There were some engine cooling issues, with cooling fluid coming out of an overflow valve, but after the cooling system was "burped" there were no further issues.

Mr. McCallman also noted that several months prior to the accident flight, on March 2, 2014, he and Mr. John Ritchey flew the airplane about 3 hours from Spruce Creek to Peachtree, Georgia, and during that flight, the airplane performed flawlessly.

Mr. McCallman further noted that the airplane had been passed down from the Ritcheys' father and that it had originally utilized MOGAS. With no MOGAS available, they utilized 100LL to

fly to Peachtree. Upon arrival, someone came up to them and said he had one or two of the same type of airplanes and knew of a mechanic to use.

Mr. McCallman also suggested to Mr. Ritchey that he get a Rotax specialist to go through the engine at next inspection. Mr. Ritchey said he was going to get a flight instructor and mechanic, but Mr. McCallman didn't know if he ever did. Mr. McCallman also noted that Mr. Ritchey was an excellent pilot who utilized correct procedures.

Mr. McCallman has reviewed this record.

Paul R. Cox
Senior Air Safety Investigator